

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Mary Claire Whelan. I am a New Haven resident and a farmer at Massaro Community Farm. I also work with the New CT Farmer Alliance, an organization made up of over 450 farmers in the state.

I am writing in support of SB284: AN ACT INCREASING THE AGE FROM EIGHT TO EIGHTEEN YEARS FOR AN INCOME-ELIGIBLE PERSON TO OBTAIN MEDICAL ASSISTANCE REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS. I also urge you to go beyond expanding access up to age 18; we need to open access to HUSKY and healthcare to all immigrants of any age, including parents and adults.

The New CT Farmer Alliance has also voted in favor of supporting this bill, because we know that immigrants represent a vital part of our local food system, and we believe that they deserve access to healthcare.

As a farm worker, I know how hard it can be to get by without access to adequate health insurance. I've seen my coworkers and myself struggle to keep ourselves healthy while we paradoxically spend all of our time growing nutritious food for our communities. Farm workers, including immigrant farm workers, are a vital part of our state's economy, and deserve the tools they need to keep themselves and their families healthy.

By leaving immigrant workers behind in our COVID recovery efforts, we are leaving behind some of the very people that kept us fed during the tumultuous pandemic. Healthy communities require healthy people at every link in the food chain. If the pandemic has shown us anything, it's that expanding HUSKY to cover immigrants of any age would do a lot to keep our *entire* community safe.

Thank you for your time,
Mary Claire Whelan